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Emergency Management Officials Encourage Illinois Residents to Learn a Life Saving Skill

Spotlight: Four skills that can help save lives during a disaster

SPRINGFIELD – During the course of a year, the State of Illinois could see any number of potential disasters – from a tornado and earthquake to flash flood or ice storm. The most important thing to protect during a disaster is your life and the lives of those around you. That’s why this month, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and local emergency management agencies are highlighting the importance of lifesaving skills like first aid, CPR, fire prevention and utility management. These are simple skills that can help save lives during a disaster.

“Learning four simple lifesaving skills can transform your role during an emergency or disaster,” said IEMA Director Alicia Tate-Nadeau. “Emergencies can happen fast and it can take time for first responders to arrive on the scene. By enhancing your skillset, you are trained and skilled to be the help until first responders arrive.”

Getting to know your neighbors can be extremely helpful in a crisis. Research reported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency suggests 46 percent of individuals expect to rely on people in their neighborhood for assistance within the first 72 hours after an emergency or disaster.

Utility Management

When a potential disaster threatens your home, take action to keep your loved ones safe by shutting off the gas, water and electricity to your home. Failure to do so can result in fires and explosions and various home water supply issues.

Water can quickly become a precious commodity following a disaster, so knowing how to properly shut off the main water valve to the house can be a critical step in disaster preparedness.

Different gas meters have different shut-off procedures, so it is important to contact your local gas company for guidance. Never attempt to turn the gas back on yourself; only a trained and certified professional should perform this task.

When shutting down your electricity, always shut off all the individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit. For more information on taking care of all your utilities, visit www.ready.gov/safety-skills.

Additionally, if you are in an area that is prone to floods or earthquakes, there are steps you can take to protect your home from their impact. You can learn flood-mitigation techniques at <https://go.usa.gov/xPr2C> and <https://go.usa.gov/xPrZY>, and earthquake-protection measures at <https://go.usa.gov/xPr2Y>.

Fire Prevention

Making sure your home has functioning smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors on every level, and at least one fire extinguisher, is one of the simplest ways to protect your family. Test your alarms monthly and contact your local fire department for extinguisher training.

Another key step in fire prevention is making sure your family knows two ways out of your home in the event of a fire and practicing a fire drill with children regularly. The [National Fire Protection Association](#) has a wealth of resources available to help you create a culture of preparedness within your family.

To prevent fires from starting, stay in the kitchen when cooking, position barbecue grills at least 10 feet from flammable materials and keep children away from cooking areas. Also immediately replace any worn or damaged appliance cords, and do not run cords under rugs or furniture. For more fire safety tips, go to <https://go.usa.gov/xPr24>.

CPR and First Aid

No matter how well you prepare for disaster, you simply cannot guarantee your loved ones or neighbors won't get hurt. If someone does get injured, you can increase their chance of survival or full recovery by applying the skills learned in a basic first aid and CPR course. Your local chapter of the [American Red Cross](#) can provide information on available courses.

For more information on how to plan and prepare for all disasters or hazards, visit state's preparedness website, Ready Illinois (www.Ready.Illinois.gov).